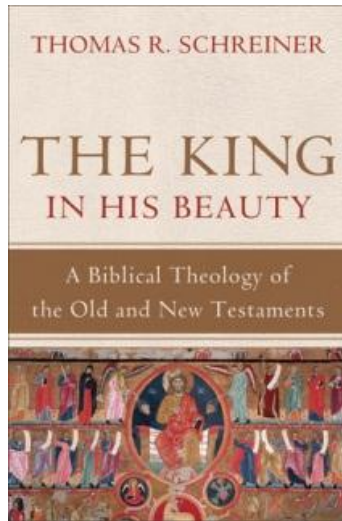




Thomas Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic), 2013.

Visitors to Baker's website - <http://bakerpublishinggroup.com/books/the-king-in-his-beauty/327200> - will find this description of Schreiner's volume:

Thomas Schreiner, a respected scholar and a trusted voice for many students and pastors, offers a substantial and accessibly written overview of the whole Bible. He traces the storyline of the scriptures from the standpoint of biblical theology, examining the overarching message that is conveyed throughout. Schreiner emphasizes three interrelated and unified themes that stand out in the biblical narrative: God as Lord, human beings as those who are made in God's image, and the land or place in which God's rule is exercised. The goal of God's kingdom is to see the king in his beauty and to be enraptured in his glory.

One familiar with the work of von Balthasar will naturally hear echoes here of that author's 'Glory of the Lord', his massive, confusing, convoluted foray into the Glory of God in the bible and Christian theology. Fortunately for readers of Schreiner's volume, no such convoluted confounding confusion is found in '*The King in His Beauty*'. In 9 parts Schreiner develops his theme through critical and intelligent examination of each of the biblical books. These parts are:

- Part 1: Creation to the Edge of Canaan
- Part 2: The Story of Possession, Exile, and Return
- Part 3: Israel's Songs and Wisdom
- Part 4: Judgment and Salvation in the Prophets
- Part 5: The Kingdom in Matthew, Mark, and Luke-Acts

Part 6: Eternal Life in the Gospel and Epistles of John
Part 7: The End of the Ages Has Come according to the Apostle Paul
Part 8: Living in the Last Days according to the General Epistles
Part 9: The Kingdom Will Come

Each part is followed by an 'Interlude' which summarizes the section and introduces the following.

Schreiner's purpose is spelled out thusly:

...the contention here is that the phrase 'the kingdom of God' thematically captures, from a biblical theology standpoint, the message of Scripture' (p. xiii).

... my goal in this book is to unpack the canonical writings in their final form (p. xv).

Others before him have tried, and failed, to unify the whole of Scripture into a single theme or idea. That because the biblical texts won't be pigeonholed or forced into conformity. They consist not of 'theology' but 'theologies' so that it is far more appropriate always to speak of 'the theologies of the Bible'. Paul's theology isn't John's and Jeremiah's isn't the theology of Genesis.

For that reason, as interesting as Schreiner's views are and as cogently as they are argued and presented, the title of his volume is simply wrong. 'The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old And New Testaments' should be 'An Attempt to Describe the Theologies of the Old and New Testaments through the Prism of the King in his Beauty'.

And Schreiner knows it for he himself recognizes that the biblical texts are theologies and not theology.

When he passes from his brief introductory material into his examination of Genesis and the other books of the Bible he raises questions due to his appreciation of the canonical approach. The canonical approach is so beset by problems that any structure built upon its foundation must also be problematical. So, for instance, when Schreiner writes in connection to the creation narrative

A canonical approach supports a Trinitarian reading... (p. 5)

one can only raise an eyebrow and say to himself or herself, 'what? Why?' Ancient Israelites certainly did not read the text of Genesis through a trinitarian lens and the accident of the entire canon is hardly a good enough reason to read into texts what is not there. The canonical approach simply raises more questions than it solves and consequently is not the best paradigm for a theology of the Bible.

The canonical approach relies entirely on the invention of the codex. The codex didn't exist in Ancient Israel. Reading the texts of Ancient Israel as though it did and as though each book

understood its canonical relation to the entire collection (not to mention the New Testament itself, which is required for a Trinitarian reading of Genesis 1 and 2) is simply bad method.

Enough, though, of the negative. There is much that is positive in this volume. First, Schreiner stresses the Lordship of God and the proper response to that lordship by his people. That truly is a theme visible throughout the Old and the New Testaments, and S's descriptive prose engages readers and draws them in.

Schreiner isn't afraid, either, to talk about sin and judgment and even wrath, all of which redeem his book and occlude the methodological error of appealing to the canonical approach.

In short, this is a very good book because Schreiner takes the time to examine each book of the Bible in light of the Lordship of God, his King-ness, as explicated in those books. The Bible is, after all, a book about God and his interactions with mankind, the creature.

Many will find themselves in agreement with Schreiner at many junctures and many will not. All will agree with him somewhere and no one will agree with him everywhere. On balance, however, there is more to appreciate here than there is to lament, and that's a win for Schreiner.

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